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COMMUNICATION

[By an accident for which apologies are here made, the following letter, which should have appeared in our issue of last October, has been delayed till now.]

TORONTO, June 13th, 1917.

THE EDITOR OF THE *American Historical Review*:

Sir:

Will you allow me to make a comment upon certain statements in General Chittenden's review of my edition of *David Thompson's Narrative*, in your April number, which are incorrect and consequently misleading as to the value of the *Narrative* to historical students? He says that "the value of the *Narrative* as historic authority is of course quite different from that of the *Journals which have been separately published*". The statement italicised is incorrect. These journals consist of several thousand pages of foolscap size covered with handwriting so fine that they often run six or seven folios to a page. Extracts from them amounting to a very few pages were published by Dr. Coues in his *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest* (New York, 1897), and twenty-one pages were published by Mr. Elliott in the *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* for March and June, 1914, after my book had gone to press. The remaining portions of the journals, amounting to far more than 95 per cent. of the whole, have not been published, and it is scarcely likely that they will be published except as scattered fragments in journals of local societies, etc., for they contain a mass of detail of various kinds which is much more useful when it has been synopsized into one volume by the author himself.

General Chittenden strongly emphasizes his statement that, as the *Narrative* was written by Thompson in later life, after his lifework was completed, it is not of equal historical value to his Journals written during the course of his explorations, though he modifies this statement by saying that Thompson had his journals beside him when he was writing, and he therefore accords the published *Narrative* the position of "a most useful supplement to the Journals", which as I have shown are unpublished.

Part I. is an account of life in the country between the Rocky Mountains and Hudson Bay during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and as it is not in journal form it might be subject to the strictures directed against it by the reviewer, but Part II., which deals with the Rocky Mountains and the country to the west of them during the years 1807-1812, is in journal form, and is in fact an abbreviation of his original journals for those years, made by Thompson himself. All the

journals now known to be in existence were in the hands of the editor when he was preparing this book for the printer, and wherever the *Narrative* varies from the Journals the fact is stated in a foot-note. The marvellous accuracy of this Second Part of the book, which could be, and was, closely compared with the original journals, causes me to place great confidence in statements of personal observations recorded in the First Part of the book, though it might often be difficult, or perhaps impossible, to check these records by reference to the extant journals themselves.

Yours truly,

J. B. TYRRELL.